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May 26, 2011

TO: Supervisor Michael D. Antonovich, Mayor
Supervisor Gloria Molina
Supervisor Mark Ridley-Thomas
Supervisor Zev Yaroslavsky
Supervisor Don Knabe

FROM: Wendy L. Watanabe *Wendy L. Watanabe*
Auditor-Controller

SUBJECT: **EXCEL FAMILY INTERVENTION, INC. FOSTER FAMILY AGENCY – A
DEPARTMENT OF CHILDREN AND FAMILY SERVICES CONTRACT
SERVICE PROVIDER – CONTRACT COMPLIANCE REVIEW**

We have completed a review of Excel Family Intervention, Inc. Foster Family Agency (Excel or Agency), a Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS) contract service provider. The purpose of our review was to determine whether Excel was providing the services outlined in their Program Statement and their County contract. We completed our review during June 2009 and conducted a follow-up review in November 2010.

DCFS contracts with Excel, a private, non-profit, community-based organization, to recruit, train and certify foster parents to supervise children DCFS places in foster care. Once Excel places a child in a foster home, the Agency is required to monitor the placement until the child is discharged from foster care. Excel oversees 14 certified foster homes, and monitored the placement of eight DCFS children at the time of our review. Excel is located in the Second Supervisorial District. DCFS paid Excel approximately \$410,000 and \$640,000 during Fiscal Years 2008-09 and 2009-10, respectively.

On January 31, 2011 we issued a report on the fiscal operations of Excel. Our report noted significant issues indicating that Excel was having difficulty meeting its financial obligations. In April 2011, DCFS placed Excel on "Do Not Refer" status, meaning DCFS will not refer any additional children to the Agency.

Results of Review

The foster children indicated that they enjoyed living with their foster parents, and the foster parents indicated that the services they received from Excel met their expectations. In addition, the Agency ensured that social workers' caseloads did not exceed the maximum established by California Department of Social Services (CDSS) Title 22 regulations, and that their staff had the required education and work experience. However, we noted that Excel did not always comply with all of the requirements of CDSS Title 22 regulations and their County contract. For example:

- Two (67%) of the three homes reviewed in 2009 were not conducting required disaster drills with the children. This issue was also noted in our April 3, 2008 report on Excel.

During our 2010 follow-up, we confirmed that one of the homes from our 2009 review and two additional homes reviewed were conducting disaster drills. The other home from our 2009 review no longer had foster children.

Excel's attached response indicates that their social workers will ensure that foster parents conduct disaster drills.

- One (33%) of the three foster parents reviewed in 2009 did not have a required health screening. After our review, the foster parent obtained an updated health screening.

During our 2010 follow-up, two (67%) of the three additional foster parents reviewed did not have a required health screening.

Excel's attached response indicates that potential foster parents will not be certified without a complete health screening.

- One (33%) of three homes reviewed in 2009 did not have a written home study completed by Excel, which is required before children can be placed in the home. However, the home had one foster child at the time of our review. After our review, Excel conducted the home study.

During our 2010 follow-up, we confirmed that the one home from our 2009 review and two additional homes reviewed had written home studies.

Excel's attached response indicates that their social workers will complete and file the home studies in the foster parents' files.

- Two (67%) of the three case files reviewed in 2009 did not have documentation that the Agency social workers visited the children weekly during the first three months of placement as required. This issue was also noted in our April 3, 2008 report.

During our 2010 follow-up, none of the three additional case files reviewed had documentation that the Agency social workers visited the children weekly.

Excel's attached response indicates that their social workers will ensure they visit the children weekly and maintain documentation.

- The three case files reviewed in 2009 did not have documentation that the Agency gave the children's DCFS social workers monthly updates on the children's progress. This issue was also noted in our April 3, 2008 report.

During our 2010 follow-up, all three additional case files reviewed had documentation that the Agency gave the children's DCFS social workers monthly updates.

Excel's attached response indicates that their social workers are now required to document their monthly updates.

- The three Needs and Services Plans (NSPs) reviewed in 2009 were completed an average of 13 months late. The NSPs also did not include the required goals for the children, and had not been approved by the DCFS social workers.

During our 2010 follow-up, all three additional NSPs reviewed included goals for the children, and had been approved by the DCFS social workers. However, one (33%) of the three additional NSPs reviewed was completed 24 days late.

Excel's attached response indicates that they will ensure NSPs are completed timely, include goals for the children, and are approved by the DCFS social workers.

- The one child reviewed in 2009 who was taking psychotropic medication did not have a current court authorization for the medication, and the child's case file did not have documentation of the required monthly evaluations by the prescribing physician. However, the foster parent and child indicated that the child was seen by the prescribing physician monthly, and the medication log indicated that the child was taking his medication as prescribed.

During our 2010 follow-up, the Agency had obtained a court authorization for the child that we previously reviewed. However, the authorization had expired and the Agency had not requested a new authorization. In addition, the child's file did not have documentation of the required monthly evaluations by the prescribing

physician. The last documented physician evaluation was five months before our follow-up.

Excel's attached response indicates that their social worker will request the court authorization timely and document their efforts. However, Excel still needs to develop procedures to ensure they maintain documentation of monthly physician evaluations.

Details of our review, along with recommendations for corrective action, are attached.

To enable Excel to begin taking action immediately, we discussed our findings and recommendations from our reviews with Agency management while completing our reviews.

Review of Report

We discussed our report with Excel on February 10, 2011, and with DCFS. Excel's response (Attachment I) indicates the actions the Agency has taken to address the issues noted in our report. DCFS' response (Attachment II) indicates they will monitor the Agency for compliance with our recommendations.

We thank Excel management for their cooperation and assistance during our review. Please call me if you have any questions, or your staff may contact Don Chadwick at (213) 253-0301.

WLW:JLS:DC:AA

Attachments

c: William T Fujioka, Chief Executive Officer
Jackie Contreras, Ph.D., Interim Director, DCFS
Jerri White, Board of Directors, Excel
Lillian Tennell, Executive Director, Excel
Jean Chen, Community Care Licensing
Public Information Office
Audit Committee

**EXCEL FAMILY INTERVENTION, INC. FOSTER FAMILY AGENCY
CONTRACT COMPLIANCE REVIEW
FISCAL YEARS 2008-09 AND 2009-10**

BACKGROUND

The Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS) pays Excel Family Intervention, Inc. Foster Family Agency (Excel or Agency) a monthly rate per child placement. The rate is established by the California Department of Social Services' (CDSS). Excel receives between \$1,430 and \$1,679 per child per month, based on the child's age, for a total of approximately \$410,000 and \$640,000 during Fiscal Years (FY) 2008-09 and 2009-10, respectively.

On January 31, 2011 we also issued a report on the fiscal operations of Excel. Our report noted significant issues indicating that Excel was having difficulty meeting its financial obligations. In April 2011, DCFS put Excel on "Do Not Refer" status, meaning DCFS will not refer any additional children to the Agency.

PURPOSE/METHODOLOGY

The purpose of our review was to determine whether Excel was providing the services outlined in their Program Statement and their County contract. We reviewed the Agency's certified foster parent files, children's case files and employee personnel files, and interviewed Excel staff. We also visited three of the Agency's certified foster homes, and interviewed three foster parents and three foster children. We completed our review in June 2009, and conducted a follow-up review in November 2010. To enable Excel to begin taking action immediately, we discussed the findings and recommendations from our reviews with Agency management while completing our reviews.

BILLED SERVICES

Objective

Determine whether Excel provided program services in accordance with CDSS Title 22 regulations and their County contract.

Verification

As noted earlier, we visited three of Excel's 14 Los Angeles County certified foster homes, and interviewed three foster parents and three children placed in the three homes. In addition, we reviewed the case files for three foster parents and three children, and reviewed the Agency's monitoring activities. During November 2010, we revisited one home, and reviewed two additional homes and case files for three additional foster parents and three additional foster children.

Results

Excel did not always adequately monitor foster homes and ensure compliance with the CDSS Title 22 regulations and the County contract. Specifically:

Foster Home Visitation and Foster Parent Certification

- One (33%) of the three homes reviewed in 2009 had carpeting and a refrigerator that needed cleaning.

During our 2010 follow-up, we confirmed that the one home had cleaned their carpeting and refrigerator, and the two additional homes reviewed were well maintained.

- Two (67%) of the three homes reviewed in 2009 were not conducting required disaster drills with the children. This issue was also noted in our April 3, 2008 report on Excel.

During our 2010 follow-up, we confirmed that one of the homes from our 2009 review and two additional homes reviewed were conducting disaster drills. The other home from our 2009 review no longer had foster children.

- One (33%) of the three foster parents reviewed in 2009 did not have a required health screening. After our review, the foster parent obtained an updated health screening.

During our 2010 follow-up, two (67%) of the three additional foster parents reviewed did not have a required health screening.

- One (33%) of three homes reviewed in 2009 did not have a written home study which is required before children can be placed in the home. However, there was one child placed in the home at the time of our review. After our review, Excel conducted the home study.

During our 2010 follow-up, we confirmed that the one home from our 2009 review and two additional homes reviewed had written home studies.

- One (33%) of the three foster parent files reviewed in 2009 did not include required personal references.

During our 2010 follow-up, we confirmed that the one foster parent file from our 2009 review had personal references. However, one (33%) of the three additional foster parent files reviewed did not include personal references.

- One (33%) of the three foster parent files reviewed in 2009 did not include a current driver's license. This issue was also noted in our April 3, 2008 report. After our review, the Agency provided a copy of a current driver's license.

During our 2010 follow-up, we confirmed that the one foster parent file from our 2009 review had a current driver's license. However, one (33%) of the three additional foster parent files reviewed did not include a current driver's license.

Children's Case Files and Needs and Services Plans

- Two (67%) of the three case files reviewed in 2009 did not have required documentation that the Agency social workers visited the children weekly during the first three months of placement as required. This issue was also noted in our April 3, 2008 report.

During our 2010 follow-up, none of the three additional case files reviewed had documentation that the Agency social workers visited the children weekly as required.

- Two (67%) of the three case files reviewed in 2009 did not have required weekly allowance logs. However, the children indicated they were receiving their weekly allowances.

During our 2010 follow-up, the three additional case files reviewed had documentation that the children were receiving their weekly allowances.

- The three case files reviewed in 2009 did not have documentation that the Agency gave the children's DCFS social workers monthly updates on the children's progress. This issue was also noted in our April 3, 2008 report.

During our 2010 follow-up, all three additional case files reviewed had documentation that the Agency gave the children's DCFS social workers monthly updates.

- The three Needs and Services Plans (NSPs) reviewed in 2009 were completed an average of 13 months late.

During our 2010 follow-up, one (33%) of the three additional NSPs reviewed was completed 24 days late.

- The three NSPs reviewed in 2009 did not include goals for the children.

During our 2010 follow-up, all three additional NSPs reviewed included goals for the children.

- The three NSPs reviewed in 2009 were not approved by the DCFS social workers.

During our 2010 follow-up, all three additional NSPs reviewed were approved by the DCFS social workers.

- The three NSPs reviewed in 2009 did not have recommendations for ongoing placement needs.

During our 2010 follow-up, one (33%) of the three NSPs reviewed did not have recommendations for ongoing placement needs.

- Two (29%) of the seven Termination Reports reviewed in 2009 did not include a thorough closing summary of the Agency's placement records.

During our 2010 follow-up review, the three additional Termination Reports reviewed included a thorough closing summary of the Agency's placement records.

Medical Services

- The one child reviewed in 2009 who was taking psychotropic medication did not have a current court authorization for the medication, and the child's case file did not have documentation of the required monthly evaluations by the prescribing physician. However, the foster parent and child indicated that the child was seen monthly by the prescribing physician, and the medication log indicated that the child was taking his medication as prescribed.

During our 2010 follow-up, the Agency had obtained a court authorization for the child that we previously reviewed. However, the authorization had expired and the Agency had not requested a new authorization. In addition, the child's file still did not have documentation of the required monthly evaluations by the prescribing physician. The last documented evaluation was five months before our follow-up.

Recommendations

Excel management ensure:

- 1. Staff adequately monitor foster homes to ensure they comply with the CDSS Title 22 regulations and the County contract.**
- 2. Foster homes are well-maintained in accordance with the CDSS Title 22 regulations and the County contract.**
- 3. Foster parents conduct disaster drills with the children.**
- 4. Foster parents obtain a health screening before being certified.**
- 5. Written studies are completed for each home to determine if the home is suitable for children before children are placed in the homes.**

6. Foster parent files include personal references and a current driver's license.
7. Agency social workers visit the children weekly during the first three months of placement.
8. Children's case files include weekly allowance logs.
9. DCFS social workers are updated monthly regarding the children's progress.
10. NSPs are prepared timely, include goals for the children, provide recommendations for ongoing placement needs, and are approved by the DCFS social workers.
11. Termination Reports include a closing summary of the Agency's placement records.
12. Children taking psychotropic medication have a current court authorization for their medication, and are seen monthly by their prescribing physician.

CLIENT VERIFICATION

Objective

Determine whether the foster parents and children received the services that Excel billed to DCFS.

Verification

We interviewed three children placed in three Excel certified foster homes and three foster parents to confirm the services Excel billed to DCFS.

Results

The foster children indicated that they enjoyed living with their foster parents, and the foster parents indicated that the services they received from the Agency met their expectations.

Recommendation

None.

STAFFING/CASELOAD LEVELS**Objective**

Verify that Excel social workers' caseloads do not exceed 15 placements, and that the supervising social worker does not supervise more than six social workers as required by the CDSS Title 22 regulations and the County contract

Verification

We interviewed Excel's administrator, and reviewed caseload statistics and payroll records for the Agency's social workers and supervising social worker.

Results

Excel's social worker carried an average caseload of seven cases, and the Agency's supervising social worker supervised one social worker, which complies with CDSS Title 22 regulations and the County contract.

Recommendation

None.

STAFFING QUALIFICATIONS**Objective**

Determine whether Excel staff had the education and work experience required by the CDSS Title 22 regulations and County contract. In addition, determine whether the Agency conducted clearances before hiring staff, and provided ongoing training.

Verification

We interviewed Excel's Administrator, and reviewed each staff's personnel file for documentation to confirm their education and work experience, hiring clearances and ongoing training.

Results

Excel's staff had the required education and work experience, the Agency conducted hiring clearances, and provided ongoing training for staff working on the County contract.

Recommendation

None.

PRIOR YEAR FOLLOW-UP

Objective

Determine the status of the recommendations from the 2008 Auditor-Controller monitoring review.

Verification

We verified whether the outstanding recommendations from our FY 2006-07 monitoring review had been implemented. The report was issued on April 3, 2008.

Results

Our April 3, 2008 monitoring report had ten recommendations. Excel fully implemented five of the recommendations, and partially implemented two recommendations. However, three of the issues noted in our current review related to monitoring foster homes, completing foster parent files and visiting children were also noted in our 2008 report.

Recommendation

- 13. Excel management implement the outstanding recommendations from the 2008 monitoring report.**



Excel *Family* Intervention Programs

the Fabric of Family

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February 16, 2011

To: Supervisor Michael D. Antonovich, Mayor
Supervisor Gloria Molina
Supervisor Mark Ridley-Thomas
Supervisor Zev Yaroslavsky
Supervisor Don Knabe

Re: Excel Family Intervention Program Agency Corrective Action Plan for Contract
Evaluation Review – November 2010

Ms. Marcella

Attached you will find the corrected Corrective Action Plan developed as a result of the Excel Family Intervention Program Agency Review/Audit conducted on November 2010. Each area of deficiency has been updated and reformatted in accordance with the proper elements needed in the plan.

If there are any questions or if any additional information is needed, please contact me at (310) 981-4146

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Regina M. Sampson". The signature is written in dark ink and is positioned above the printed name and title.

Regina M. Sampson, BS
Intake Resource Specialist

EXCEL FAMILY INTERVENTION CORRECTIVE ACTION PLAN

1. Staff adequately monitors foster homes to ensure they comply with the County contract and CDSS Title 22 regulations.

To prevent subsequent violations and deficiencies in this area all agency social workers will be responsible to visit their assigned children weekly. Documentation of these homes will be tracked through weekly home visit notes and monthly home inspections to ensure that the Certified Excel home stays within compliance of Title 22 rules and regulations.

2. Foster homes are well-maintained in accordance with the County contract and CDSS Title 22 regulations.

There are mandated monthly visits that are required by the Excel Procedures Manual stating that the agency social worker completed a monthly home inspection. These inspections consist of covering the interior and exterior of the home to ensure that it is free from debris and unsanitary conditions. See example (1)

3. Foster parents conduct disaster drills with the children.

Excel has a bi-annual disaster drill document that was given to each certified foster parent during disaster/earthquake training. Each social worker assigned to the certify home will be held responsible to ensure that the disaster drill will be conducted by the foster parent. Training for the drill will be given once a year. See example (2)

4. Foster parents obtain a health screening prior to their certification.

To prevent subsequent violations no potential foster parent will obtain their certification without their health screening completely filled out from their physician.

5. Written studies are completed for each home to determine if it is suitable for children to live in.

To ensure that this action is implemented and maintained the Adoptions Social Worker will give the Excel Administrator a list of all required documentation regarding certification of foster parents. Excel administrator will assign an Agency Social Worker to a pre-certified parent's home for the home study evaluation. Assigned ASW will complete home study that will be filed in foster parents file completing final certification for foster parent.

6. Foster parent files include personal references and a current driver's license.

All foster parent files will be reviewed and checked for personal references and a current driver license. The Intake Coordinator will be responsible to ensure that all pre-certification documents (personal references) are completed and filed before certification. When a certified parent has an expired document such as health screening, CPR or driver license, the certified foster parent will receive a letter of request to update their expire document within 10 business days. If foster parent does not comply with the letter of request, they will face de-certification with the agency.

7. Children are visited weekly during the first three months of placement.

All minors placed with Excel Family Intervention will be assigned a Social Worker. This Social Worker will be responsible for conducting a weekly visit that will be documented into a Social Worker Note for the child's folder. The Intake Coordinator will be responsible to ensure that the social worker notes are filed in the children folder. This activity will be ongoing. (See example 3)

8. Children's case files include weekly allowance logs.

All Excel Family Intervention foster parents will be responsible to give each minor placed in their home an allowance. The allowance is based on the Excel procedure with the amounts given by age. This allowance form will be turned in to the Excel office monthly to be filed in the children's folder. This activity will be ongoing. (See example 4)

9. DCFS social workers are updated monthly regarding the children's progress.

All Agency Social Workers will be responsible for documentation of monthly contact with their assigned minor's county social workers. (See example 5)

10. NSP's are prepared timely, include goals for children, provide recommendations for ongoing placement needs, and are approved by the DCFS social workers.

Assigned social worker will be responsible for initial reports due approximately thirty days after placement of minor and quarterly reports due if the minor remains in placement. All agency social worker staff will ensure that all NSPs contained comprehensive goals and objectives that are specific and measurable as specified in the County contract, including a permanency plan. Agency Supervising Social Worker (Nyora Higgs) will be responsible for reviewing and correcting all reports. The Intake/Resource Specialist will be responsible for ensuring that all reports are signed and given to the school CSW.

11. Termination Reports include a closing summary of the Agency's placement records.

To ensure that this action is maintained the Administrator will check with Intake Coordinator regarding the Date of Discharge. To prevent subsequent violations Agency Social Workers will have one week to complete a termination report after the child is discharged. This activity will be on-going.

12. Children taking psychotropic medication have a current court authorization for their medication and are seen monthly by their prescribing physician.

The agency social worker assigned to minor taking psychotropic medication will be responsible for requesting from the CSW the court authorization from the judge. If the CSW cannot receive the authorization in a timely manner the ASW will document all attempts that have been made on the CSW contact log that will be filed in the child's folder. If the CSW does not provide court authorization within two weeks of initial request, the ASW will contact the SCSW to request authorization.

13. Excel management implement the outstanding recommendations from the prior monitoring report.

Excel Resource Specialist, Intake Coordinator and Executive Director will review and implement outstanding recommendations from prior monitoring report. Executive Director will require a quarterly review to ensure recommendations are remaining intact.



ANTONIA JIMÉNEZ
Acting Director

**County of Los Angeles
DEPARTMENT OF CHILDREN AND FAMILY SERVICES**

425 Shatto Place, Los Angeles, CA 90020

April 4, 2011

TO: Aggie Alonso, Chief Accountant-Auditor
Countywide Contract Monitoring Division

Board of Supervisors
GLORIA MOLINA
First District
MARK RIDLEY-THOMAS
Second District
ZEY YAROSLAVSKY
Third District
DON KNABE
Fourth District
MICHAEL D. ANTONOVICH
Fifth District

FROM:  Elizabeth A. Howard, Section Head
Out-of-Home Care Management Division
Foster Family Agency/Group Home Performance Management

**DCFS RESPONSE TO THE AUDITOR CONTROLLER'S CONTRACT REVIEW OF
EXCEL FAMILY INTERVENTION FOSTER FAMILY AGENCY**

The Auditor-Controller's (A-C) Contract Review of Excel Family Intervention (Excel) Foster Family Agency was conducted in June 2009. The Out-of-Home Care Management Division (OHCMD) received the A-C's April 5, 2010 draft report on April 5, 2010 and responded to the report on June 10, 2010 (Attachment II).

On February 18, 2011, the A-C submitted a final draft report which included a follow-up to their initial June 2009 review. The follow-up review was conducted in November 2010 to determine the status of their prior findings. The A-C's follow-up review reflects they verified that seven of 13 recommendations were fully implemented and one was partially implemented. There were five outstanding recommendations regarding the need for timely pre-certification documentation of certified foster parents, required visits to children within the first 90 days of placement, and psychotropic medication. Excel submitted a Corrective Action Plan, dated February 16, 2011 addressing each of the A-C's recommendations.

The OHCMD will follow up on the A-C's recommendations to assess for full implementation during our next monitoring review.

KR:EAH

c: David Seidenfeld, CEO, Children and Families Well-Being Cluster
Wendy Watanabe, Auditor-Controller
Antonia Jimenez, Director, DCFS
Rhelda Shabazz, Deputy Director, DCFS

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